

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SAN SA 04472 01 OF 02 302135Z

63

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

ACDA-19 IO-14 USIE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 AID-20

OMB-01 DRC-01 /138 W

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4230

INFO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA PRIORITY

USCINCSO

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SAN SALVADOR 4472

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652; GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, HO, ES

SUBJ: HONDURAS/EL SALVADOR NEGOTIATIONS: THE FORCES AT PLAY

REF: STATE 233089

1. SUMMARY. COUNTRY TEAM ASSESSES OHE SALVADORAN POSITION ON THE DISPUTE AS FOLLOWS: 1) VIRTUALLY ALL SIGNIFICANT SECTORS FAVOR, IN THEORY AT LEAST, PROMPT SETTLEMENT OF MOST ISSUES OUTSTANDING WITH HONDURAS (DIPLOMAT AND TRADE RELATIONS, ETC.), 2) ALL ARE AGREED THAT SIGNIFICANT TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS ARE TOO HIGH A PRICE FOR SETTLEMENT AND 3) THERE IS REALLY NO STRONG PRESSURE FROM ANY ELEMENT TO SETTLE IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE AT SUCH A PRICE. IN THEIR ASSESSMENT OF THE HONDURAN SIDE OF THE PICTURE, MOST SALVADORAN OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT LOPEZ NEEDS A VICTORY AT THE NEGOTIATIONS TO SELL AT HOME, BELIEVE THAT BYZANTINE

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PAGE 02 SAN SA 04472 01 OF 02 302135Z

POLITICAL MANEUVERINGS WITHIN HONDURAS LARGELY DETERMINE ITS EXTERNAL

POSITIONS AND FEAR THAT ANY ACCORD REACHED BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES MIGHT NOT BE LASTING, GIVEN HONDURAS' HISTORY OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY. END SUMMARY.

2. AS REQUESTED REFTTEL, COUNTRY TEAM HAS REVIEWED THE STATE OF HONDURAS/EL SALVADOR NEGOTIATIONS AND HAS ATTEMPTED TO ASSESS THE POSITION OF IMPORTANT SECTORS ON THE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE ISSUE. AMONG THOSE SECTORS WHOSE VIEWS WOULD SEEM TO RATE SOME ATTENTION BY THE GOVT POLICY MAKERS WOULD BE THE MILITARY, THE PRIVATE BUSINESS SECTOR (ESPECIALLY THOSE ENGAGED IN REGIONAL TRADE), THE POLITICAL PARTIES, AND TO SOME EXTENT, THE MEDIA. CONSIDERABLY LOWER ON THE SCALE WOULD BE THE VIEWS OF THE CHURCH, ORGANIZED LABOR AND SOME PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS E.G. ATTORNEYS, AND AT THIS JUNCTURE, WE MAY ALSO DISCOUNT THE STUDENT BODY.

3. IN A SENSE, AN ANALYSIS OF THE POSITION OF EACH OF THESE SECTORS VIS-A-VIS THE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THIS PARTICULAR QUESTION IS OF LIMITED VALUE SINCE VIRTUALLY ALL SECTORS ARE IN AGREEMENT. FOR INSTANCE, NO SIGNIFICANT INSTITUTION OR GROUP OPPOSES THE RE-OPENING OF DIPLOMATIC, CONSULAR AND TRADE RELS WITH HONDURAS, NO ONE WANTS TO KEEP THE ROAD TO THE SOUTH CLOSED TO SALVADORAN TRAFFIC, NO ONE IS OPPOSED TO THE FREE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE BETWEEN THE COUNTRIES (IN FACT, SALVADORAN BORDERS ARE OPEN TO HONDURANS). EVEN ON THE QUESTION OF THE CACM, THERE IS WIDESPREAD RECOGNITION AMONG BUSINESS, WSGOVT AND POLITICAL CIRCLES THAT HONDURAS SHOULD RECEIVE AT LEAST SOME PREFERENCES IN ANY RESTRUCTURED COMMON MARKET. ALL OF THESE ARE ELEMENTS OF THE DISPUTE THAT MOST SALVADORANS WOULD LIKE TO SEE SETTLED POSITIVELY AND PROMPTLY.

4. ON THE OTHER HAND, VIRTUALLY ALL SALVADORAN SECTORS ARE EQUALLY UNITED ON THEIR POSITION ON THE BORDER DELINEATION. A SETTLEMENT OF THIS PROBLEM WOULD BE WELCOME, PROVIDED A) IT IS NOT RESOLVED BY A PROCEDURE OUTSIDE OF SALVADORAN CONTROL OR IN CONFLICT WITH THE CONSTITUTION (E.G. ARBITRATION) AND B) NO IDENTIFIABLE SALVADORAN TERRITORY IS ACKNOWLEDGED TO HAVE BEEN CEDED TO HONDURAS. (SOME POLITICAL, BUSINESS AND MILITARY LEADERS WOULD PROBABLY ACCEPT A "BORDER STRAIGHTENING" COMPROMISE IN WHICH A SMALL AMOUNT OF SALVADORAN TERRITORY WAS CEDED TO HONDURAS IN EXCHANGE FOR A VIRTUALLY EQUAL AMOUNT OF HONDURAN TERRITORY CEDED TO EL SALVADOR.) THE SALVADORANS FEAR ARBITRATION BECAUSE THEY BELIEVE HONDURAS

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SAN SA 04472 01 OF 02 302135Z

CAN MAKE A BETTER CASE FOR ITS CLAIMS ON THE BASIS OF HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS. ANY CONSPICUOUS LOSS OF TERRITORY IS UNACCEPTABLE TO ALL SECTORS, NOT ONLY FOR NATIONALISTIC REASONS, BUT BECAUSE OF THE RATHER SIMPLISTIC (IF SUPERFICIALLY LOGICAL) ARGUMENT THAT EL SALVADOR HAS LITTLE LAND AND MANY PEOPLE WHILE HONDURAS HAS MUCH LAND AND FEW PEOPLE. THE PRESIDENT HIMSELF HAS TOLD ME THAT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT HE COULD SURVIVE THE CRISIS PROVOKED BY ANY OBVIOUS TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS. AND THE WAY ALL OF THE OPPOSITION

PARTIES, IN A RARE SHOW OF UNITY WITH THE GOVT, ARE CURRENTLY RALLYING IN SUPPORT OF THE PRESIDENT'S DENUCIATION OF THE PACT OF BOGOTA WHICH, INDIRECTLY IS A STAND ON TERRITORIAL CONCESSION, IS INDICATIVE OF THEIR BELIEF THAT ANYONE CAUGHT ON THE WRONG SIDE OF THIS ISSUE IS POLITICALLY DEAD.

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PAGE 01 SAN SA 04472 02 OF 02 302120Z

63

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SAN SALVADOR 4472

5. DESPITE THE RELATIVE UNITY OF MOST ELEMENTS OF THE SOCIETY ON THESE MATTERS, IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT TO SETTLE WITH ONDURAS IS NOT AT ALL GREAT. EVERYONE PROFESSES THE DESIRABILITY OF SETTLEMENT, SPEAKS LOVINGLY (IF SOMEWHAT PATRONIZINGLY) OF THEIR HONDURAN BRETHREN, WOULD PREFER TO FORGET THE 1969 CONFLICT, AND WOULD WELCOME RESTORATION OF RELATIONS WITH HONDURAS TOMORROW - BUT NOT AT A SIGNIFICANT PRICE. IN THE ONE SECTOR WHERE IT WOULD APPEAR THAT INTEREST IN A PROMPT SETTLEMENT WOULD BE GREATEST - THE PRIVATE BUSINESS SECTOR - OPTIMISM ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE CACM AND THE HONDURAN ROLE THEREIN HAS NOTICEABLY ERODED IN THE PAST TWO YEARS. NO ONE RELIES ON THE RESTORATION OF THE FIVE-COUNTRY MARKET, TRADE PATTERNS HAVE LARGELY BEEN ADJUSTED TO MAKE UP FOR THE LOSS OF HONDURAS, AND INTEREST IS NOW

FOCUSED PRINCIPALLY ON NON-TRADITIONAL MARKETS AND PRODUCTS OUTSIDE OF THE REGION. TO MOST BUSINESSMEN, RENEWED ACCESS TO HONDURAS WOULD BE A NICE WINDFALL, BUT IS NEITHER EXPECTED NOR CONSIDERED ESSENTIAL. AND THOSE PRIVATE SECTOR ELEMENTS WHO EITHER FOR THEIR OWN BUSINESS REASONS OR THE TRANSPORTATION SECTOR BEARING THE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 SAN SA 04472 02 OF 02 302120Z

COSTS AND INCONVENIENCES OF THE GERRY SERVICE, FOR INSTANCE) OR FOR A DEEPER CONCERN FOR CA INTEGRATION (REGIONAL THINKERS LIKE THE DE SOLA'S) DO SEE A REAL NEED FOR SETTLEMENT, HAVING LONG COMPLAINED THAT THEY HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO "REACH" THE MOLINA GOVERNMENT, MEANING THAT THEY HAVE INSUFFICIENT POWER OR INFLUENCE TO GUIDE ITS COURSE OF ACTION, WHILE THE MILITARY, BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL PARTIES HAVE NEVER BEEN PARTICULARLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, THE THESIS IN THESE SECTORS HAS BECOME RATHER WIDESPREAD THAT THE TALKS SIMPLY REPRESENT AN INTERIM TACTIC BY THE HONDURANS LEADING TO THEIR LONGER RANGE GOAL OF ARBITRATION. SHOULD THE TALKS END IN DECEMBER WITH NO AGREEMENT, REACTION WILL PROBABLY BE MINIMAL PROVIDED THE BORDER REMAINS QUIET. IN FACT, SOME PCN LEADERS, AWARE OF THE ATMOSPHERICS BOUND TO SURROUND

THE FORTHCOMING LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, HAVE INDICATED THAT IT MIGHT BE BEST TO SUSPEND THE TALKS UNTIL MID OR LATE 1974, ANOTHER SIGN THAT PROMPT SETTLEMENT IS NOT FOREMOST IN THEIR MINDS. EVEN THE PRESIDENT, WHO IS COMMITTED TO ARRIVING AT A JUST SETTLEMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, IS NOT DISPOSED TO PAY A SIGNIFICANT PRICE FOR A PROMPT ACCORD, ESPECIALLY IN TERMS OF A BOUNDARY SETTLEMENT. IN SUMMARY, THEN, THE SIGNIFICANT SECTORS OF SALVADORAN SOCIETY WHO PLAY ON THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS 1) REMAIN UNITED IN THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE FULL RANGE OF RELATIONS WITH HONDURAS (ALTHOUGH THEY ARE NOT AGITATING FOR IT), 2) REMAIN UNITED IN THEIR OPPOSITION TO ARBITRATION OF THE BORDER QUESTION AND THE CEDING OF ANY NATIONAL TERRITORY AND 3) DO NOT, AS YET, PERCEIVE THE BENEFITS OF NUMBER 1 TO EXCEED THE POLITICAL AND PSYCHIC COSTS OF NUMBER 2. THUS, THERE ARE NO POLITICALLY POWERFUL SECTORS OR INSTITUTIONS WHOSE INTERESTS WOULD BE BEST SERVED BY PROMPT SETTLEMENT OF THE DISPUTE AT THE PRICE OF TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS.

6. CONCERNING PARA 2 OF REFTTEL - THE RELATIONS OF HONDURAS' INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION TO THE NEGOTIATIONS - THE MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE SALVADORAN ELEMENTS IN GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS AND THE POLITICAL CIRCLES SEE LOPEZ' POSITION AS NOT TOTALLY SECURE AND BELIEVE HE WOULD REQUIRE SOME EVIDENCE OF CIVITY AT THE NEGOTIATIONS IN ORDER TO SELL THE ACCORD AT HOME. AS THE SALVADORANS ASSESS THE SITUATION, THE ONLY CONCESSION EL SALVADOR HAS TO OFFER IS NATIONAL TERRITORY, THAT "POUNDS OF FLEX" AS THEY DESCRIBE IT, TO OFFSET HONDURAS' HUMILIATING DEFEAT IN 1969. (THIS ASSESSMENT IS PARTICULARLY STRONG WITHIN THE SALVADORAN MILITARY WHO BELIEVE THAT

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SAN SA 04472 02 OF 02 302120Z

THE PRIDE OF THE HONDURAN ARMED FORCES WILL NOT BE RESTORED UNTIL SUCH A DIPLOMATIC VICTORY IS WON OR REVENGE IS EXACTED IN BATTLE.) SALVADORAN POLITICAL AND BUSINESS LEADERS TEND TO REGARD THE HONDURAN POLITICAL STRUCTURE AS EVEN MORE BYZANTINE THAN THEIR OWN AND BELIEVE THAT HONDURAS' EXTERNAL STANCE ON AN ISSUE IS OFTEN RELATED SOME DOMESTIC POLITICAL MANEUVERING (THE 1969 CONFLICT ITSELF IS OFTEN ATTRIBUTED TO SUCH INTERNAL CONFLICTS). THEY ALSO CONTEND THAT ECONOMIC PRESSURES FOR SETTLEMENT WITHIN HONDURAS HAVE DIMINISHED AS THAT COUNTRY, TOO, HAS ADJUSTED TO THE POST 1969 AND POST DECREE 97 REALITIES.

7. IN GENERAL, HOWEVER, SALVADORANS DO NOT FEAR THE HONDURANS, DO NOT DESIRE A RENEWAL OF ARMED CONFLICT, AND OCCASIONAL RUMORS OF MILITARY ACTIVITY OR BUILDUP ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BORDER USUALLY PROMPT RELATIVELY LITTLE REACTION. STILL, GIVEN HONDURAS' HISTORY OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL LEADERS FEAR THAT EVEN IF AN ACCORD IS EVENTUALLY REACHED, IT COULD WELL BE DISAVOWED BY SOME FUTURE HONDURAN GOVERNMENT, A CONSIDERATION THAT FURTHER DISCOURAGES ENTHUSIASM FOR PROMPT SETTLEMENT.
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